



Wendy Driscoll

Teachers and students across Nova Scotia have a lot to say about a summer fixed election date.

Info - wdriscoll@gnspec.ca

Seeing our student population excitedly going to get their federal votes in was so nice to see as a social studies teacher, and my students had a blast prepping and running the election and then another group of students enjoyed doing the official count. If the set election date stays in the summer, all students in Nova Scotia will miss out on these real time learning opportunities, which makes a subject like politics which can sometimes not be as "interesting" for students more interesting. I had a student actually thank me for involving them because they finally felt like they understood what the buzz was about. I had grade 9 students asking their parents if they could stay up to watch the results! But none of them had much knowledge on the provincial election that had taken place just a month before that.

- Amy Jo Comeau, Teacher, Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education

Totally agree with you on this one!!! We need elections to be during school months so we can engage our youth with politics and elections.

- Lynda Shovellor, Teacher, Halifax Regional Centre for Education

I couldn't agree more that invaluable learning opportunities would be missed if elections only took place in the summer months. Not only would it likely lead to lower voter turnout (and, sadly, that may be by design) but it also prevents students from engaging in the election process through visitation from candidates who are invited to speak, the opportunity to see the flurry of activity that takes place around polling stations in the 24 hours leading up to the election, the availability of current news stories that impact the outcome of the election (scandals, of course, but also announcements that are being made related to policy as well as commitments made by incumbents seeking support), and, finally, the public discourse that is taking place in communities in the weeks prior to election day. If you plan to cite any of these responses, I give you permission to use my name/words to support your presentation.

- Matt Campbell, Teacher, Sydney Academy

We have participated in the CIVIX program for the past few elections and it has really been beneficial for the students to complete the unit in conjunction with the election...in years where there wasn't an election the kids were definitely less engaged.

- Michelle Brown, Teacher, Churchill Academy

I emailed my MLA my concerns about fixed summer election dates provincially and how I feel like it is a step backwards for student engagement in the electoral process.

- Karen Binder, Teacher Madeline Symonds Middle School

I participate in the CIVX program and run it for Central Kings. I have done so for the past four elections and have incorporated it as a learning opportunity and as a life skill to teach our students about Federal, Provincial and Municipal politics. I encourage my students to participate and seek employment at polling stations. Some of them did so in the last election. The knowledge they gain from the CIVX experience is valuable as a life skill. This year, with the federal election being so early though, it was extremely difficult for our students to become as engaged. I witnessed the difference and reduced buy-in from the students as many of the activities I typically would do had to be trimmed. Calling the election in July would erase any possibility for student engagement, but furthermore, I believe that voter turnout will also suffer. This past summer with Covid there was an anomaly. Fewer people were going elsewhere and were in Nova Scotia to vote. In a typical election year this would not be the case!

I recall a conversation with a former student who voted for the first time several years ago. This was pre-Citizenship Education 9. I ran into them as I was entering the polling station to vote myself. They were proud to be able to cast their ballot for the first time, but their excitement quickly faded when they discovered they had spoiled their ballot by placing their name on it. When I told them that I was teaching Cit Ed and what we cover, they commented that they wished they had such a course when they were in school. Students who learn through CIVX become aware of their rights, but also their responsibility to properly vote as adults. We hope that the lessons learned in Grade 9 carry through to adulthood. Our students in Grade 9 will be the next generation of 18 year old voters. Future generations will have limited knowledge if this learning opportunity is lost with the passing of this Bill.

- Darryl Macdonald, Central Kings High School

I have been a CIVIX Student Vote school leader for over a decade now. The level of learning and engagement that occurs with this program is phenomenal. We are able to engage students in the electoral process and make the act of voting and the importance of civic action all the more meaningful.

We know that youth represent the lowest demographic group who regularly vote in elections. Part of the motivation behind the Citizenship 9 course was to address the voter apathy and disengagement of young people. The ability of schools to bring in candidates, to conduct real time votes at school and to see the results posted on election night serves to create understanding and meaning for students in a way that few other learning experiences can.

Taking this real-time learning opportunity off the table and denying educators the chance to teach students about provincial politics and elections first hand is a real loss. I hope you are able to persuade the government of this. I fully support the idea of a fixed election date, but please emphatically request that this date be during the school year when the best chance for meaningful learning happens.

- Peter Murphy, Teacher, Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education

I 100% agree with you! The work Civix has done in creating quality resources for us all to use has been so helpful in engaging my students in the political process. I like the idea of fixed election dates but the summer is ridiculous!

- *Darcie Moore, Teacher, Chester NS*

I fully support a fixed election date , however, I am concerned that a summer election in Nova Scotia will permanently deny students and teachers in our province a valuable learning opportunity. I know that having an election in the summer means that school buildings could be used as polling places and that this sounds a lot easier logistically. However, I feel that the gains here are not nearly as significant as the losses experienced by students and teachers if they are denied this learning experience forever.

While most are not of voting age, young people know what they think is fair, equitable and just, and they know when actions speak. - It is my opinion that fixing an election date outside of the school year demonstrates a disinterest in having our young people engaged in the political process.

- *Wendy Driscoll, Teacher, Bicentennial School*

A junior high student:

I was far more engaged with the federal election this year because I was in school, than the summer election when I was not. I was able to talk about issues with my class when we did the Student Vote in class.

Two high school students:

"I am incredibly concerned about the move to hold fixed elections mid-July as it would eliminate the opportunity for the student vote in schools. The student vote has fostered my interest in politics, especially helping me learn about local candidates. It gives me hope that although we cannot yet vote, someone will still hear the voice of the students in our schools. I beg you to consider a different election date that would coincide with the September-June school year so this amazing program can continue to run."

"Student Vote helped me develop tools that I plan to use in the future when I will finally be able to vote in elections. Voting for the first time can seem like a daunting task for me and my peers. I believe we need to encourage and support all young people to get more involved in Canadian politics so that voting in the future will not be scary, it will be something to look forward to.

Student Vote does exactly this, and I believe it would truly be a huge loss for students to take this away."